

Living Out a Half-Truth by falsewings

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Summary:

Written for the Day 7 Stony Week Prompt: Secret Relationship

Karen invites married couple Nancy and Jonathan to Thanksgiving dinner back in Hawkins. Nancy finds a way to get Steve (aka Nancy and Jonathan's secret partner) invited as well. Nancy hopes this doesn't end in disaster.

Living Out a Half-Truth

Author's Note:

- Inspired by [the small hours](#) by pterawaters.

So basically, last year I read pterawaters' *the small hours* and couldn't get that universe out of my head. I asked pterawaters if I could right a sort of continuation for that fic and she said yes. I wrote a chunk of it, then got distracted with a WIP for a different fandom (which I still haven't posted yet T.T). I wanted to get the other fic done first but this year's stoncy week is almost ending so I quickly finished this last night (and nixed some scenes that I wanted to tackle but had writer's block for).

I usually spend at least a month editing a fic before posting it, but again, I wanted to get this done for the last day of Stoncy Week so this only had some brief revision (my apologies in advance).

So. I 100% recommend that you read pterawater's fic first because I wrote this fic with only barest explanation of how they all got together. I mean I also put in details that weren't in *the small hours* but it barely contradicts what was already established or just implied.

The thing about finishing monster hunting with Jonathan is that now Nancy can no longer avoid mother's requests to come home for Thanksgiving.

However, it isn't until her mom brings up the subject that Nancy realizes she has no idea what Steve's plans are.

"Hey," she greets him when he comes home later that evening, giving a quick peck on the lips. "Jonathan's in the kitchen making pasta for dinner."

"Coming home from work to home cooked dinner and a kiss? I could get used to this."

"Actually, I wanted to talk. About Thanksgiving. My mother begged me and Jonathan to visit them this year. She's laying on a ton of guilt."

"Yeah, I can see that happening. So you're going?"

"Maybe," Nancy hedges. "What are your plans though? Will you be Hawkins too?"

"Nah, my parents don't really do Thanksgiving. I mean," he adds when he notices Nancy has that look on her face, "My mom visits sometimes during Christmas. But Thanksgiving..."

"So what do you usually do instead?"

Steve shrugs. "Hang out with Robin. Max too, if she doesn't have plans with the other kids."

Except this year, Robin is in California for the next few months. And Max is visiting El & Will.

"Jonathan and I can stay. It'll be our first Thanksgiving with you."

"And when's the last time you saw your parents? Nancy, it's fine. You don't have to worry about me."

"I'm in love with you. I'm pretty sure that means I get to worry about you." As she wraps her arms around him, "I'll come up with a plan. Let me think of something, okay?"

Steve presses a kiss to her forehead and answers, "Okay."

Nancy calls her mother during her lunch break the next day.

Working as an admin assistant at a women's magazine isn't something

Nancy thought she'd enjoy. But lack of a work history or a college degree limited her options. Nancy finds herself disinterested in a lot of the articles but none of the writers, most of them women themselves, treat her as a coffee girl or dismiss her opinions outright. Sometimes, Cheryl, one of the editors, will even look at articles Nancy wrote on her own time, just to give her some helpful critique.

"I have a favor to ask," Nancy says as soon as her mother picks up the phone.

Last night, Nancy had plotted out how she'd pitch the idea to her mom. She had told her previously that Steve had let them stay with him when she and Jonathan first arrived in Chicago. She just hadn't mentioned that she and Jonathan never actually moved out. Karen Wheeler was under the impression that Steve was a friend that they occasionally hung out with. So getting Steve invited to Thanksgiving might take some convincing. Which is why Nancy planned on using pity.

"So we ran into Steve the other day," Nancy starts.

"Oh? How is he?"

"He's good. Except. He said he didn't really have any plans for Thanksgiving. His parents won't be in Hawkins that weekend. And I thought, maybe he could come down with Jonathan and me. And you know, he could have Thanksgiving with us?"

"Oh," and here, her mother sounds confused. "You want him to come to Thanksgiving?"

"I know it sounds weird. But we can't stand the idea of him being alone for the holiday. Especially when he's been so helpful with getting us familiar with Chicago."

"Well...I suppose it won't hurt for him to join us."

They arrive in Hawkins Wednesday afternoon. By the time Nancy

parks the car in the Wheeler driveway, Karen is already walking out the front door to greet them. She grips Nancy in a tight hug as soon as she steps out of the car.

"Hi mom. It's nice to see you too."

"I'm just glad you're safe," her mom whispers to her.

"I told you. It's over. We're settled. I promise."

Karen finally releases her and discreetly wipes away the tears in her eyes. Nancy's mother doesn't know the full details of the Upside Down or just how many times Hawkins was host to supernatural government conspiracies. But there was an incident in '89 that Karen Wheeler accidentally got involved in and they had to tell her about the monster hunting.

"Jonathan!" Karen says now, calling him over into a hug. Jonathan endures it just as awkwardly as he always does. "I'm so happy you both could join us this year. I hope your mother doesn't mind. I guess she'll get the two of you for Christmas."

"Oh. Right."

Finally, Karen turns her attention to Steve who, during the greetings and hugs, had begun to unpack their luggage from the trunk.

"Hi, Mrs. Wheeler. Um, thank you for having me this weekend."

She smiles warmly, "Of course, it's no trouble at all. And it's good to see you again dear."

Karen herds them into the house then. "Nancy, you and Jon will of course take your old room. And I hope you don't mind taking the couch Steve."

"Yeah, it's fine with me."

"Let me get Holly. She's probably on the phone again, talking up a storm..."

They don't have to wait too long before Mike arrives.

Mike lets Nancy pull him into a hug as soon as he enters the house. When she lets him go, he finally notices the surprise guest. "Steve is here. Why is Steve here?" Nancy swats his shoulder for that. "Don't be rude."

Their mother is the one who actually answers his question. "Nancy and Jon invited him to join us this year."

Mike gives his sister an incredulous look. Nancy assumes that it translates to something like, *You invited your secret third partner to a family function, why the hell did you do that?*

It isn't until after dinner that Mike is able to get Nancy alone, pulling her into a corner of the living room and he finally gets to question her.

"What the hell Nancy?," He says, keeping his voice low, "Are you trying to give mom and dad a heart attack?"

Nancy crosses her arms tightly against her chest. After checking to make sure that their parents and Holly are otherwise occupied, she says, just as quietly, "I didn't like the idea of Steve being all alone in Chicago for Thanksgiving."

"What happens if mom finds out that you and Jonathan aren't *just* friends with Steve."

"They won't find out!"

Mike scoffs, "Like the Party didn't find out?"

"That was different." Max was living in Chicago. It didn't take long for her to realize that Nancy and Jonathan weren't just couch surfing at Steve's. And once Max knew, of course the rest of the Party would find out as well.

"It'll be fine," Nancy insists.

“I hope so. Because I really don’t want mom and dad to break your heart Nancy.”

Nancy waits until eleven that night before she and Jonathan sneak out of her childhood bedroom and creep down the stairs. Steve is adorably confused when they wake him up.

“Hey. What’s wrong?”

“No, it’s nothing,” Jonathan says, “We just...”

“We missed you.” Nancy finishes and Steve’s slow smile makes her feel warm and bright.

“So you snuck out?”

“It’s fine. What’s suspicious about sharing a midnight snack with a friend?”

Nancy offers a hand then and then, after he gets up from the couch, she keeps holding his hand all the way to the kitchen. She doesn’t let go until she goes to pull out some hot chocolate mix and heat up some milk. Jonathan and Steve stand together by the kitchen island, closer than strictly necessary but casual enough for plausible deniability. The whole day, it’s been like this. The both of them sharing little intimacies with Steve while also trying to avoid rousing suspicions. It doesn’t feel like enough though, not to Nancy and they have two more days of this.

“I’m sorry,” she says to Steve as she hands him his mug, “This was a bad idea, wasn’t it? Staying at my parents’ house I mean.”

“What? No, it’s fine Nancy. I’m glad you invited me.”

“Even with the pretending?” Jonathan asks.

“I mean, it’s not ideal but...” he ducks his head then, and confesses, “I’d be missing you, if I’d stayed in Chicago so...”

“Hey,” Nancy says, pinching his arm, “Jonathan and I would have

stayed in Chicago for you.”

“I know, but I’m not going to be the reason you don’t go to see your family. I’m happy,” he reiterates, “that I’m here with you both.”

On the morning of Thanksgiving, Nancy is woken up by Jonathan who is already in such a good mood that Nancy is immediately suspicious.

“You should come downstairs,” he tells her after giving a good morning kiss to her forehead.

“Why?”

“Just trust me.”

It turns out that the must see event is Steve, in the kitchen, peeling potatoes and helping her mother prepare tonight’s dinner.

“Hi? Good morning? What is happening?” Nancy says, bemused.

“Sorry, Nancy,” her mom starts, “Normally I wouldn’t bother a guest with any of the cooking but Steve insisted on helping with dinner.”

Steve shrugs, “I just figured I should earn my keep. Potatoes are done Mrs. Wheeler. What do you want me to do next?”

Karen thinks for a moment then says, “Put the potatoes in a bowl of cold water. After that, can you chop up some onions for me?”

So. While Jonathan awkwardly sits with her father in front of the TV (Ted’s version of father-son-inlaw bonding) and Holly regales Mike and Nancy with tales of her (thankfully non supernatural) teenage antics, Steve stays in the kitchen, following Karen’s directions and keeping her company. Every so often, Nancy hears her mom laughing, probably at some joke Steve made.

After dinner, her mother asks Nancy to help her with the dishes but

it's mainly so they can catch up, face to face, for the first time in ages.

Nancy tells her about her job and her life in Chicago. She's just finished telling this story about a party she went to with Steve and Robin when her mother tells her, "I didn't realize that Steve was such a good friend."

Immediately, a cold spike of fear shoots through Nancy's body. However, before she can get too far into a panic spiral, she assesses the situation. Karen's voice doesn't sound accusatory as much as it sounds confused. And Nancy supposes that's a natural reaction. Even before she and Jonathan began dating Steve, their mutual relationship hadn't been very conventional.

"Well, he was always being pulled into the same weird government stuff as we were. And the last job we did, he really helped us out. Even though we called him in the middle of the night and we hadn't spoken to him in months. He's just a really caring person, you know?"

Karen hmms softly. "I think I understand what you mean."

Saturday morning, Nancy, Jonathan and Steve pile into their car. This time, Jonathan drives and Steve takes the passenger seat. As soon as the Wheeler house is no longer in view, Jonathan reaches over and holds one of Steve's hands in his own.

"So... did you enjoy your Thanksgiving?" Jonathan asks Steve.

"Yeah. Best Thanksgiving ever. Don't tell that to Robin and Max though," he adds with a wink.

"Even though we had to hide you?" Nancy asks, finally putting words to the worry that had been gnawing at her since they all drove into Hawkins and started to pretend. She invited Steve because she couldn't stand the thought of him alone in their apartment. And because she wanted to spend Thanksgiving with both of her partners. But what if a few days of hiding how much she and Jonathan loved

Steve was actually the worst choice.

“Nancy, you don’t have to like, apologize or anything. I know why we couldn’t tell your parents.”

“We know you know *why*,” Jonathan interjects, “But Nancy wants to know how it made you feel.”

“Hmm. Well. Okay, that part sucked,” he admitted to them. “It sucked that you guys got to kiss and share a bed. And it sucked that you had to write me out of some of your stories. But. You both kept *smiling* at me and told stories to brag about me. You snuck out of your bedroom as if we were goddamn teenagers just so you guys could see me. So. Still a pretty good Thanksgiving.”

Nancy leaned forward and pressed a kiss to Steve’s shoulder, wishing that they were already in their apartment so she could actually just kiss him. “Best Thanksgiving ever?”

“Of course. It’s the first one we got to spend all together.”

Nancy smiled.